

# **It Takes More Than a Village-- The Importance of Community to Wildfire Management**

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# Wilkinson's Theory of Community as an Interactional Field

- Contacts among people define the local territory



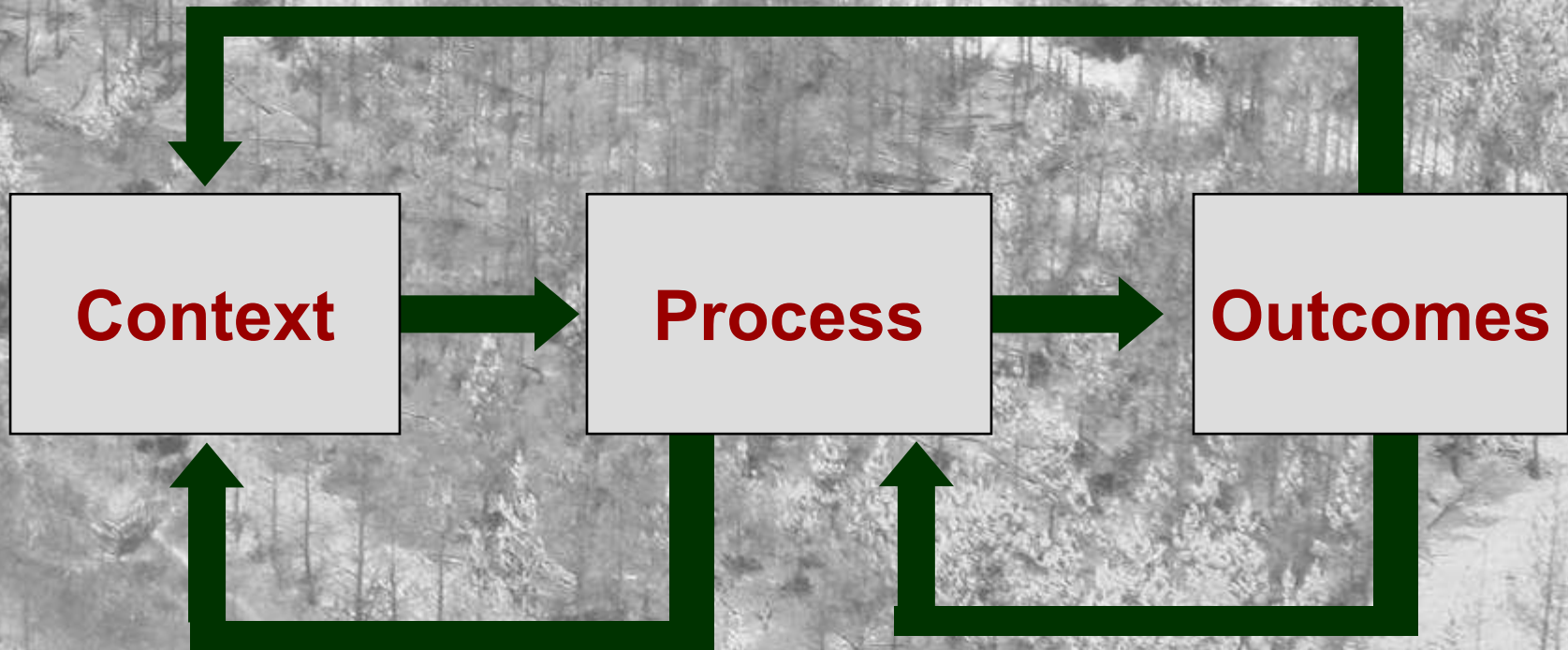
Contacts around wildland fire—  
readiness, response and recovery



# Wilkinson's Theory of Community as an Interactional Field

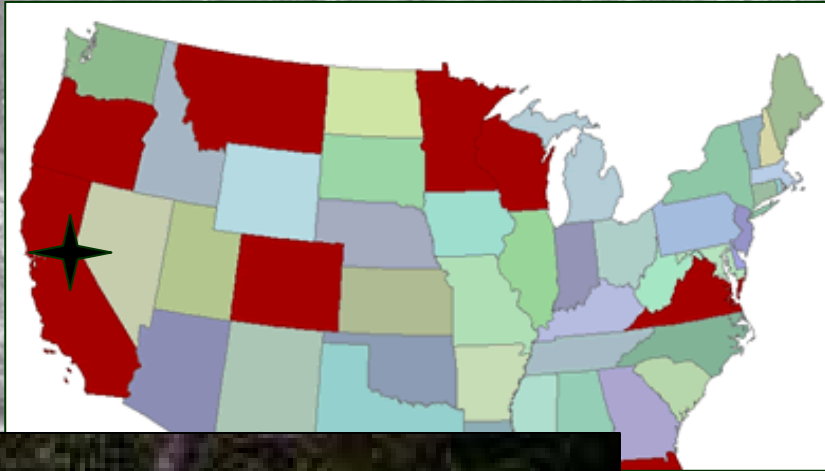
So long as people interact, the  
community will persist and give rise to  
collective identity and continued action  
in the locality

# Community and Wildfire Management





# Grizzly Flat—Importance of Community to Planning





An aerial photograph of a forested hillside. A dirt road or path winds through the trees. The terrain is uneven with various types of vegetation. The title 'Grizzly Flat' is overlaid in red text at the top center.

# Grizzly Flat

- no local unit of government
- reputation as outlaw community
- contractor went in with open mind
- contractor supported and used what was being built by the community itself



# Wildfire concerns in NZ:

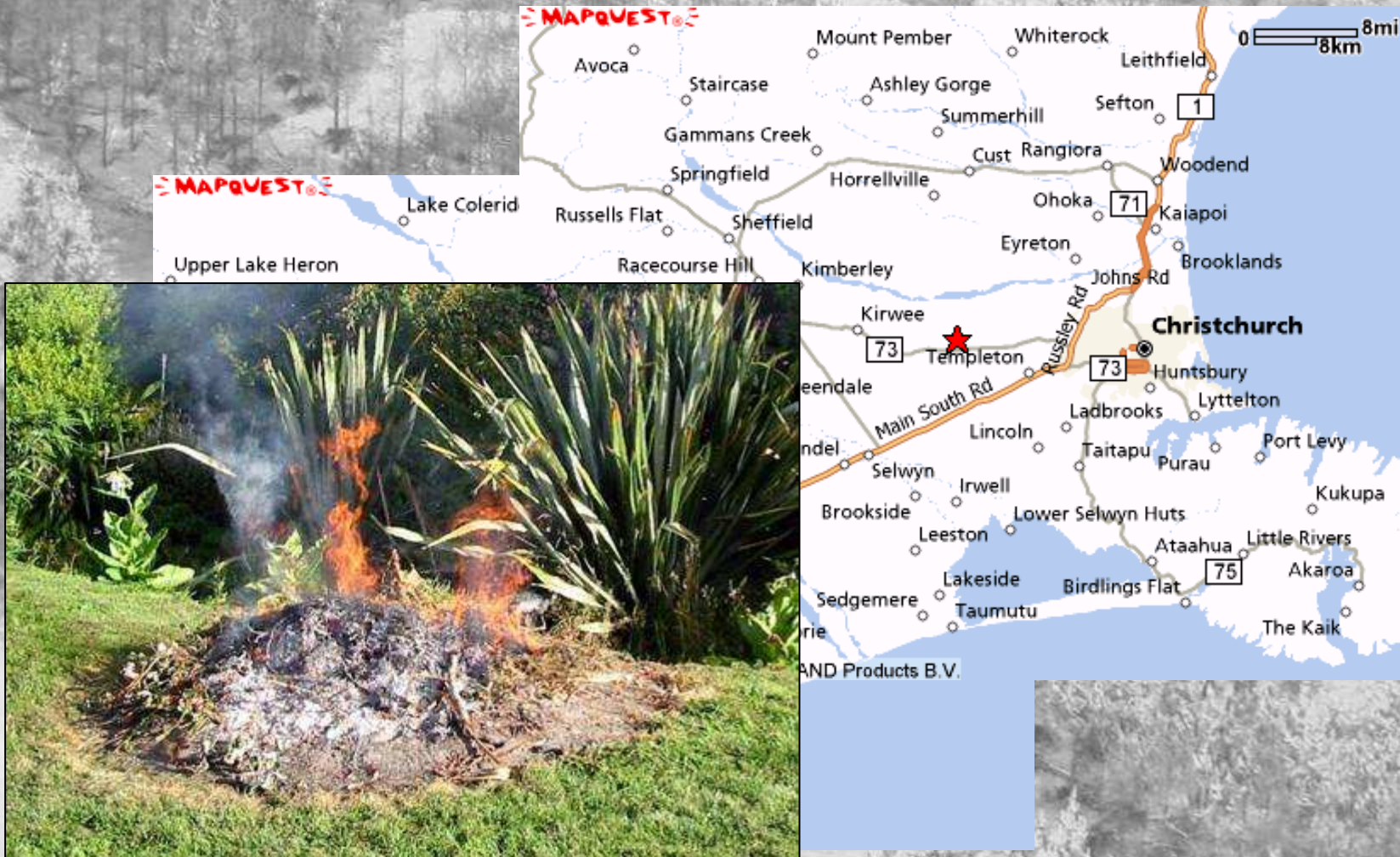
- Global climate change scenarios
- Expanding rural-urban interface
- Land tenure review
- Residents unprepared

# Importance of community to wildfire impacts...





# Importance of community to wildfire impacts...





# West Melton fire damage...



- grasslands
- woodlots
- orchards
- vineyard
- hedges & fences
- farm equipment
- one house



# Lifestylers

A rural smallholding attractive to people who wish to live a rural lifestyle but whose income is derived from non-farming activities.

In West Melton...

New lifestylers < 15-20 years

Old lifestylers > 15-20 years



# West Melton fire highlighted differences

Old lifestylers describing new lifestyler...

*... you have the rugby and 'chardonnay set', the wives, they all meet for drinks every Friday and Saturday, it's not healthy, and they don't mix with anyone else.*







# Impacts greater on new lifestylers because...

## Old Lifestylers

- More rural experience
- Correct local knowledge
- Take responsibility--prepared
- No additional steps to take

## New Lifestylers

- Risk assessment based on urban experience
- Depend on authorities
- Relatively unprepared
- Have taken steps



## West Melton wildfire risk...

New lifestyle explaining that they were not prepared because they had no experience with wildfire as a risk...

*We were prepared for a civil defence emergency, what to do, in that we had a meeting point, but not for fire. We had long grass, we were way unprepared, and the experience of having a fire has now made us very aware.*



# West Melton wildfire risk...

New lifestyle describing changes they've made...

*We mow a strip now around the house, we have put in sprinklers around the house and make sure we now plant less flammable plants. No more pine trees, we won't plant pine trees again...*





# Importance of community to wildfire impacts...





# Mount Somers fire damage...

- deer fences
- boundary fences
- equipment
- pasture
- plantations
- shelterbelts





An aerial photograph of a mountainous landscape covered in dense, dry-looking vegetation. The terrain is rugged with various ridges and valleys. The text is overlaid on this background.

# Mount Somers community interactions

Observations of emergency official who has worked in area...

*They're very close knit up there, very close knit. And once you're in that area they do treat you like family... they're very good at talking amongst themselves too, which of course, is the best way of getting over something...*



# Mt Somers community interactions

- Help with stock during snowstorm
- Assist family following accident
- Raise money for village park
- Support rugby team



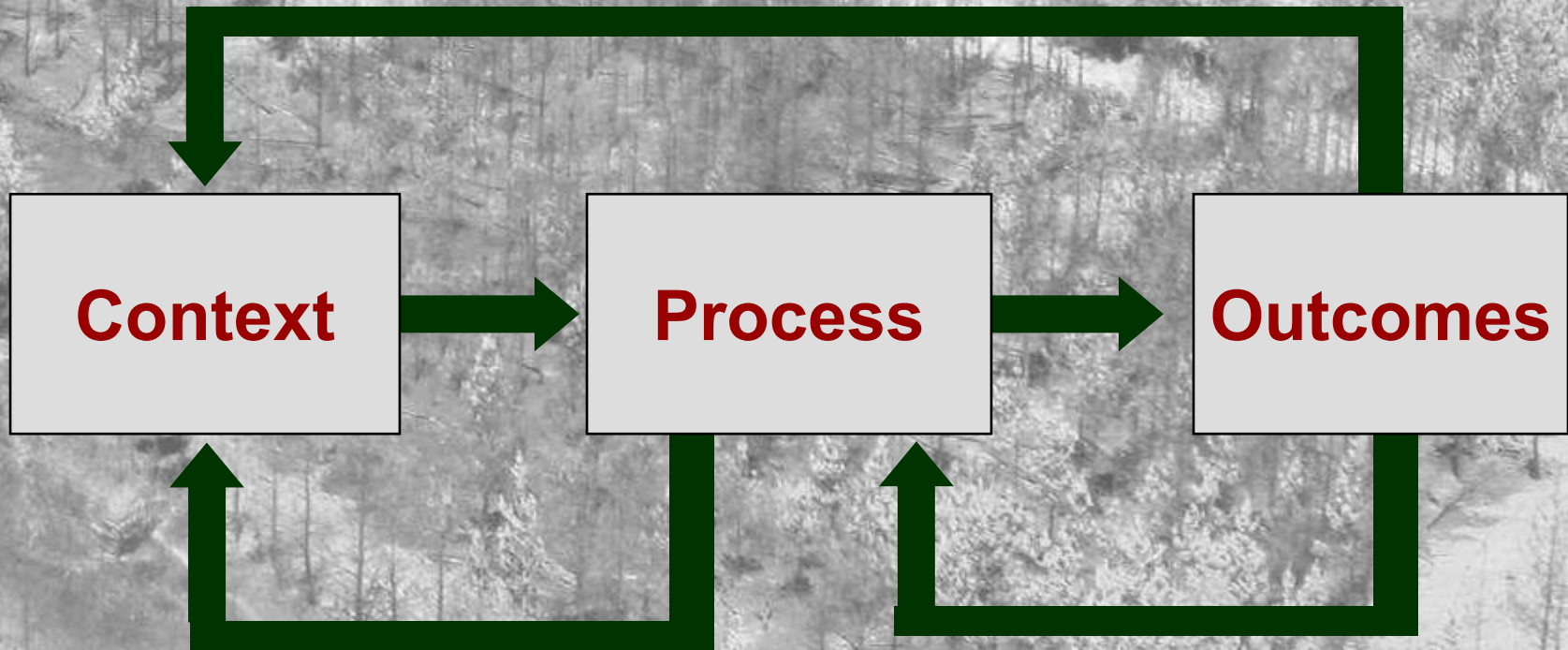


# Mt Somers community interactions

- Help with stock during snowstorm
- Assist family following accident
- Raise money for village park
- Support rugby team
- Moved stock
- Feed fire fighters
- Housed those evacuated
- Tried to fight fire
- Offered pasture



# Community Wildfire Protection Planning





An aerial photograph of a forested landscape. A river or stream winds through the lower portion of the image, surrounded by dense vegetation. The upper portion shows a more open, hilly area with scattered trees and shrubs. The overall tone is naturalistic, with various shades of green, brown, and grey.

# **Communities as part of the solution...**

**The success of wildland fire management hinges as much on the acceptance, support, behavior, and cooperation of at-risk communities and individuals and the general public as on biophysical fire science the technology.**

**People, Fire and Forests (2007)**



- This research was sponsored in part by the Joint Fire Science Program. For further information go to [www.firescience.gov](http://www.firescience.gov)

